



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
Jacksonville District

# News Release

Release No. 06-44  
For Release: August 28, 2006  
P.O. Box 4970 Jacksonville, FL 32232-0019

Nanciann Regalado, Corporate Communications  
Phone: 904-232-2236  
FAX: 904-232-2237

---

*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

## **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers says Lake Okeechobee, Herbert Hoover Dike are ready for first hurricane of 2006**

Jacksonville, Fla. – In preparation for the arrival of Hurricane Ernesto, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has completed inspections of the Herbert Hoover Dike and made gate adjustments at the locks at Lake Okeechobee. “The safety of lakeside communities is our highest priority,” said Col. Paul L. Grosskruger, Jacksonville District commander. “With the lake water level at around 12 feet, there is virtually no risk of water going over or through the Herbert Hoover Dike. We are confident that the dike is secure and ready to handle the rain and winds of Hurricane Ernesto.”

The spillway and locks along the Okeechobee Waterway will be staffed around the clock to allow immediate response with water control structure adjustments as storm conditions change. Locks will close to navigation if and when 39 mph winds reach the locks.

With below average rainfall this summer throughout the Central and South Florida project system, Lake Okeechobee's elevation is currently 12.13' NGVD, more than four feet lower than at this time last year. "Right now, we have a great amount of water storage capacity in the Kissimmee River, the Kissimmee River Basin and Lake Okeechobee," said John Zediak, chief of the Jacksonville District's water management section. Zediak further explained that, with the lake's water level at about 12 feet, and the ground level of Pahokee, one of the lowest lying areas around the lake, at about 15 feet, that if the Herbert Hoover Dike did not exist as it does today, water would flow into the lake rather than out of it.

The Herbert Hoover Dike, a 140-mile long embankment, surrounds Lake Okeechobee. At its highest point, the dike is approximately 45 feet above sea level, and at its lowest point, it is about 32 feet above sea level. The top of the dike is about 20 feet wide, and its base is about 250 feet wide – nearly the size of a football field. The dike was built and has been successfully managed by the Corps for more than 70 years.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has always taken, and will continue to take, actions that put protection of the public above all other considerations. To that end, we work diligently to maintain the safety and stability of Herbert Hoover Dike," Grosskruger added. "We will continue to consult with local emergency management officials to provide information for their use, in the highly unlikely event that they must make a decision to recommend evacuation of the communities surrounding Lake Okeechobee. With the current status of the lake and the dike, and the current weather predictions, we

do not believe this will be necessary. We encourage the lakeside communities to listen for and follow further instructions from their local emergency coordinators.”

For further information, please see our web site at <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil> or call the Corporate Communication Office at 904-232-2236.

# # #